

Mar 14, 2018

Education Committee  
CT

Dear Members of the Education Committee, Committee,

As an advocate with Food Allergy Research & Education, I am writing to you to voice my support of HB 5452. The bill addresses important concerns regarding the safety of students, including allowing school transportation personnel to intervene in an allergic emergency, having the state update current school food allergy guidelines, and putting policies in place to keep food allergic students safely participating in culinary programs.

I am the parent of an 18 year old high school senior, who has been living with life-threatening food allergies since he had his first anaphylactic reaction on his first birthday. Fortunately, due to a combination of vigilance and good luck, he has only needed an Epi-Pen on one occasion since then, and we are grateful that one was available and that appropriately trained people were present to administer the life-saving medication.

Food allergies are a serious and growing public health problem with no cure. Fifteen million Americans have food allergies, including nearly 6 million children. In Connecticut, up to 8 percent of children have a food allergy.

Connecticut is among the top five states for food anaphylactic food reactions and food allergy diagnosis insurance claims.

An allergic reaction can escalate to anaphylaxis within minutes and, if left untreated, may cause death. Food allergy is the most common cause of anaphylaxis, but insect stings, medications and latex are other triggers

Epinephrine is the first-line treatment for anaphylaxis. It is safe and simple to administer.

Only 30 percent of reporting districts require bus drivers to have training in anaphylaxis and administering epinephrine.

Current State Department of Education (CSDE) guidelines for students with food allergies were written in 2006, updated in 2012, and are out of date with current medical and legal standards of care. As an example, CSDE guidelines do not acknowledge food allergies may be considered a disability under the ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

For these reasons, I ask you to bring HB 5452 to a vote and vote YES.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

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